PITTA

Newsletter of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh
New Series Volume 12 Number 9 September 2015

FIELD OUTING: Sunday, 13th September 2015: Geological Survey of India Campus, near Bandlaguda village. Meeting point: Punjagutta (opp. Mangatrai Pearls), 6.00AM.

The GSI Southern Region campus is a vast area with a large number of different plants and trees, and has a fairly varied bird life. There is also a museum which would be kept open specially for us, which will be well worth seeing. This will be a half-day trip. For further details and to co-ordinate, please contact Ms. Surekha Aitabathula (99490-38532).

INDOOR MEETING: Talk by Diyanat Ali, Founder President, Great Hyderabad Adventure Club, on "Life Lessons by Nature".
Monday, 7th September 2015, 6.30PM: Goethe-zentrum Hyderabad, 20 Journalist's Colony, Road No. 3, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500 034. (For directions, please contact 94905-09251 or 040-65526443/23350040)

The speaker, Diyanat Ali, is an adventurer, entrepreneur and a nature lover. A certified Outbound and Experiential Learning Facilitator, he will speak on the lessons humans can learn from nature. Whether growing a garden, spending time with a dog or taking a stroll in a park, looking at the stars, listening to bird calls or just opening your windows to let the fresh air in, there is an opportunity to constantly reflect and learn from nature. Diyanat will elaborate on various aspects of this interesting subject.

LADAKH TRAVELS

Text and photos: Vikramdev Rao

Leh Valley Panorama

Umesh's request to write a piece for the Pitta was prompted by my photo of the Black-necked Crane taken during my recent trip to Ladakh. Not being an avid birder I was initially reluctant as my trip was primarily a photography tour focusing on landscapes and monasteries. Two members of our group were keen on birds so I wasn't totally away from that aspect, but this is going to be more of a travelogue rather than a birdwatching trip report.

Our journey started in Srinagar, the troubled city in the state of Jammu and Kashmir. Srinagar is dominated by the Dal Lake which is the centerpiece of this beautiful region. While the lake photographs well and all the houseboats and shikaras make for photogenic subjects, the lake is generally dirty and crowded, being the primary recipient of all the sewage and discharge from the hundreds of houseboats that populate the lake.

From Srinagar we drove to Kargil where we stayed the night in a tented camp a few kilometers away from the town. En route we drove through Sonmarg which was packed with pilgrims on their annual pilgrimage to Amarnath. As we drove towards the Zoji La ('La' means 'Pass') to Kargil, we could see the vast tented base camp for the pilgrims down in the valley. A few days into our trip, we heard that there were heavy rains in this area resulting in the pilgrimage being cancelled, making me wonder how they evacuated this huge tented camp.

As we approached Zoji La, the terrain of the Himalayas became evident and the dangerous nature of the structure was apparent. No wonder they continually have landslides and huge boulders rolling down and wiping out large sections of the road. Credit must go to the Border Roads Organisation who is constantly at work repairing, rebuilding and maintaining these fragile roads in order to keep the lines of communication open.

We passed Drass which was the scene of the most intense fighting during the Kargil war, to the NunKun tented camp where we spent the night. The next day we resumed our journey to Leh. On the way we stopped at Mulbeck, the site of Maitreya, a statue of the Buddha carved in stone, and then on to Lamaryu, one of the largest Buddhist monasteries in Ladakh. The terrain in this area is unusual and, over the years, has eroded in such a way that it is referred to as 'Moonland'. We reached Leh in the evening and checked into our hotel, the "Mahey Retreat'.

Lamaryu Monastery

Visitors are advised to spend time acclimatizing, as altitude sickness can be quite a problem. So, the next day was spent in visiting monasteries in and around Leh so that we could get acclimatized to the altitude of 11,000 ft. We visited Siptuk, Shey, Leh palace and the Shanti Stupa.

Entrance to the former Leh Palace

Shanti Stupa

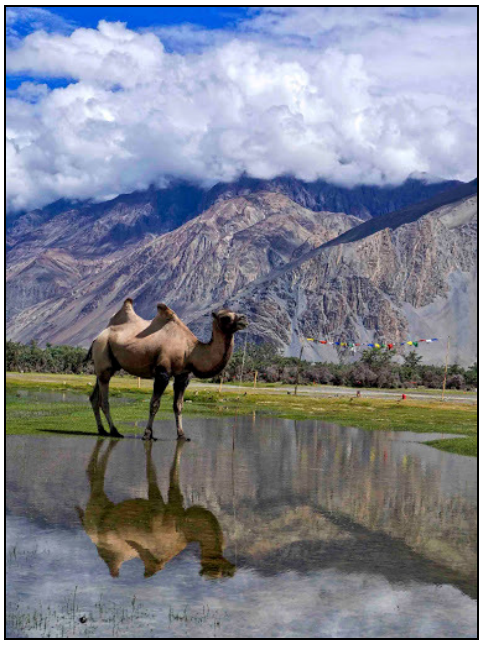
On the following day we drove to Nubra Valley over the Kardong La which, at 18500ft, is the highest motorable pass in the world. We drove down to Diskit which is at the same altitude as Leh. We passed the sand dunes of Nubra on our way to the Edelweiss tented camp where we stayed the night.

Next morning we spent time taking photographs of birds found on the camp site. I was only able to get some shots of a pair of Black Redstarts (*Phoenicurus ochruros*), but got to see the Black-billed Magpie (*Pica pica*), Yellow-billed Chough (*Pyrrhocorax graculus*), Red-billed Chough (*Pyrrhocorax pyrrhocorax*) and White-capped Water Redstart (Male) (*Chaimarrornis leucocephalus*). Identification of all these birds was possible because two of our group were keen birders.

Black Redstart (male)

Black Redstart (female)

Bactrian Camels in Nubra Valley



Bactrian Camel

After breakfast we went to the sand dunes where riding the Bactrian (double-humped) camels is a great attraction for tourists. We didn't go for a ride but spent our time taking photographs. We got one of the camel herders to bring his camel away from the crowds so that we could take photographs without having the background disrupted. After a visit to the monastery we headed back to Leh but little did we realize what we were in for.

On the way up to Kardong La we got stuck in a traffic jam due to unseasonal rains which resulted in the mountain streams flowing over the road. It took us almost three hours, instead of the planned hour, to reach Kardong La. Once we passed Kardong La I thought the worst was over and we would be in Leh in quick time, but it was not to be.

Just a few hundred meters past Kardong La we came to a standstill. On enquiry we were told that the rains had resulted in a collapse of the road in two places and no one had an idea of how long it would take. It was raining constantly and this must have hampered the work. We were stuck in our vehicles for hours! We finally got in to Leh at 10:30 pm, stiff and tired, having spent more than 8 hours in the vehicles without even an opportunity to get out and stretch. There must have been at least 600 vehicles stranded because of the damaged road. Quite an experience!

The night's experience didn't slow us down, though - off we were at 7:30 am on our way to Pangong Tso, a lake shared by India and China. Fortunately the rain had stopped, although it was overcast and didn't make for good photography.

From the Chang La at an altitude of 17600 ft, we descended to Pangong Tso. The landscapes of multitudinous colours were a treat and made for great photo opportunities. The bare mountains of ochre, magenta, brown and black with the valleys of green and yellow, constantly changing as we progressed, were truly awe-inspiring.

Pangong Tso

Then we arrived at Pangong Tso, a huge stretch of blues and greens amongst the colours of the surrounding mountains. Truly a sight to be seen! As we drove alongside the lake towards the hotel, we saw Brown-headed Gulls (*Chroicocephalus brunnicephalus*), Ruddy Shelducks (*Tadorna ferruginea*) and Bar-headed Geese (*Anser indicus*). After checking in, we went back to the shores of the lake for a photo session which included shots of birds along with landscapes. Towards the late evening we took some time-lapse sequences which showed the waning light with the clouds moving across the skies in a movie format. We came back again after dark, in the cold, to try and take photos of the night sky, but to our bad luck the sky clouded over and dashed all hopes of this.

Brown-headed Gull

Early next morning we were back taking photos before the breeze picked up and got some great shots of the reflections of the mountains on the lake. The aforementioned birds were also around and we managed to get some flight shots. As the sun rose higher we took off for our return journey to Leh. En route we came across some Himalayan Marmots and spent almost an hour taking photographs.

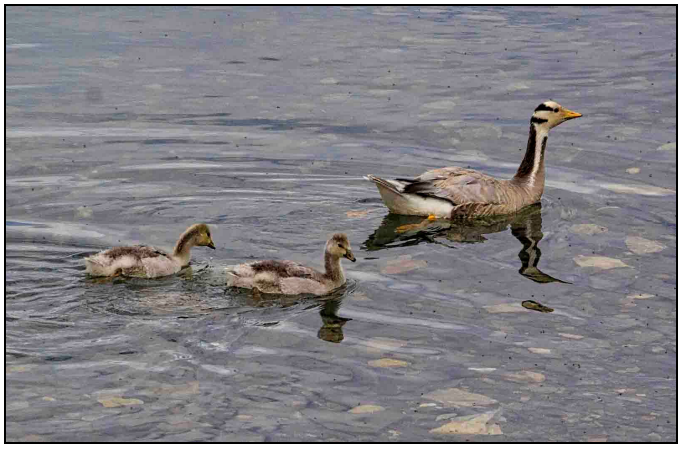
Himalayan Marmot

Because of the improved road conditions the number of tourists are increasing and they stop and try to attract the Marmots with food. As they have no fear of humans they come readily to take the biscuits and chocolates offered and in time to come will depend on handouts – an example of how improved accessibility is threatening our wild life.

Tso Moriri

Next day we were off on a two-night trip to Tso Moriri and Tso Kar. The roads were not as bad as those to Nubra and Pangong, but the journey was long. As usual we stopped en route for photo sessions since there were great opportunities for photographing landscapes. At Tso Moriri we stayed at the Yak tented camp. Though it was windy and cold outside it was quite comfortable in the tents. The evening was spent taking photos although we were interrupted by a sudden downpour which had us scuttling back into our vehicles and back to the tents. After dinner (all our meals were generally vegetarian although in some places we were able to get non-veg) someone announced that the sky was clear and the stars were out. So we got back into our vehicles to get away from habitation, so that we could take photos of star trails and night skies. Bundled up against the cold, we managed to get some shots but in a short while the clouds moved in and that was the end of our attempt to photograph the stars.

The next morning was spent trying to take photos of water birds but because of the open nature of the terrain, they would see us well in advance, and would move away from the shores as we approached. We tried to hide behind rocks and boulders where we could find them but were generally unsuccessful. We saw a whole lot of Bar-headed Geese feeding on insects in the water.



Bar-headed Goose with chicks

Tso Kar

Mid-morning, we left for Tso Kar which we reached in the early evening. The lake was almost totally dry, which was a bit of a disappointment, but as we approached we saw a pair of Black-necked Cranes (*Grus nigricollis*). Armed with our long lenses and tripods we set out to take photographs of these elusive birds. We couldn't get too close because the terrain was slushy, but we were happy to take photographs of a rare species. Ruddy Shelducks were also visible.

Black-necked Crane

The following morning started out as a dull and cloudy day but as it progressed, the sky cleared a bit and we were witness to beautiful cloud formations and great landscapes. The cranes and ducks were still around and we managed to take some photos but they were too far and the photos were more in the nature of record shots. The brilliant skies and colourful mountains more than made up for the disappointment in spotting and photographing birds.

Himalayan Wild Ass

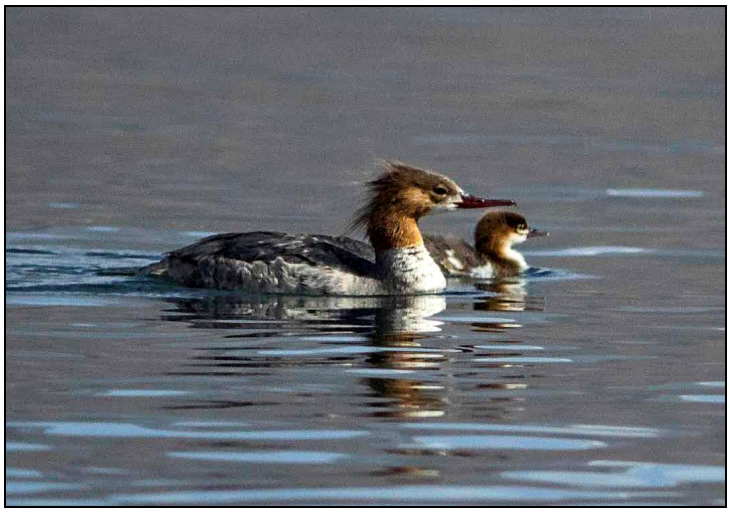
We drove back to Leh for the last night of the trip. On the way we saw some Himalayan Wild Asses which seemed very similar to the Wild Asses seen on the Rann of Kutch. We stopped at the Thiksey monastery but just before we got there we came across a Chukar (*Alectoris chukar*) which scooted across the road. Out came our cameras and though I managed to get a couple of shots, they were not clear as the bird was running and it was difficult to focus.

Chukar

We had a comfortable night even though the electricity was playing hide and seek. The next day we were off to Hyderabad via Delhi.

Given below is a list of birds seen:

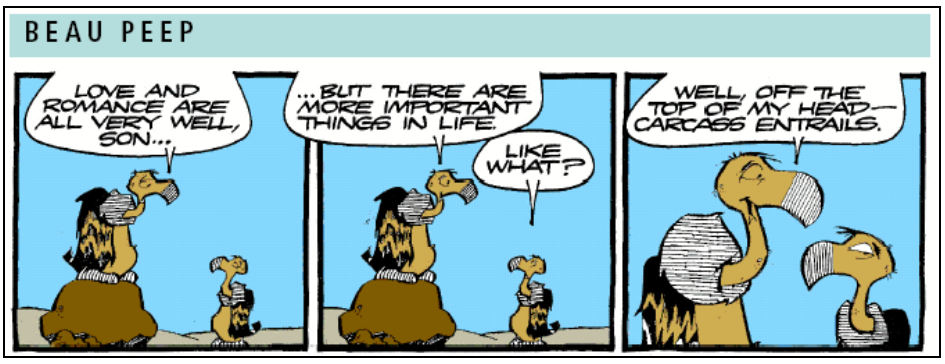
Common Hoopoe
Black-billed Magpie
Yellow-billed Chough
Red-billed Chough
Black Redstart
White-capped Water Redstart
Bar-headed Goose
Common Merganser
Ruddy Shelduck
White Wagtail
Grey Wagtail
Citrine Wagtail
Himalayan Buzzard
Common Rosefinch
Eurasian Hobby
Chukar
Black-necked Crane
Brown-headed Gull
Desert Wheatear



Common Merganser with chick

Local inhabitants in traditional attire

Bird Humour


BEAU PEEP
LOVE AND ROMANCE ARE ALL VERY WELL, SON...
...BUT THERE ARE MORE IMPORTANT THINGS IN LIFE.
LIKE WHAT?
WELL, OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD— CARCASS ENTRAILS.

(From Times of India, 01-05-2014)

***

The Story of the Grey-bellied Cuckoo

Text and photos: Yella Prakash Rao

Swarnandhra Colony at Yapral, a few km from Sainikpuri, is witness to a special natural phenomenon of Brood Parasitism. We all have heard of the Koel/Cuckoo laying eggs in the crow's nest and the crow, subsequently, raising the chicks of the Koel. This is what Brood Parasitism all about. However, the actors in this story are a little different. They are the Grey-bellied Cuckoo (*Cacomantis passerines*) and the Ashy Prinia (*Prinia socialis*).

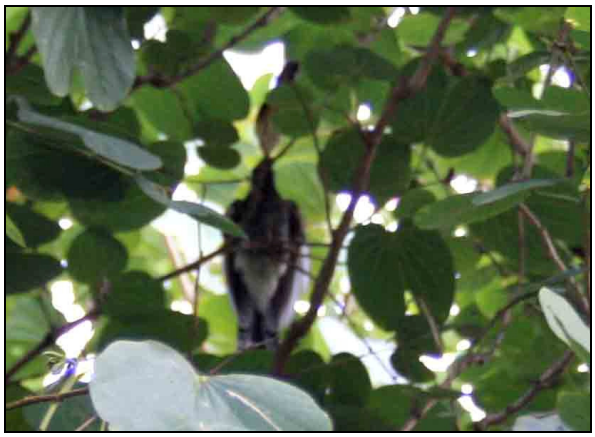
The Cuckoo mother has once again tricked the Ashy Prinia into rearing its young, a job both have perfected over a very long time. The author is witness to this special phenomenon for the fifth consecutive year (2011-2015) within the colony. The phenomenon of feeding, which is the most conspicuous activity of Brood Parasitism, was noticed mainly in the months of August through October.

The chick makes a distinct call….. *Tsshh.. Tsshh.. Tsshh.. Tsshh..* and the Prinia (foster parent) makes its distinctive call….. *TeTeeiiii… TeTeeiiii…* while foraging. The cuckoo chick makes a cacophony of screeching sounds while being fed and at the end, the foster mother is pecked or shooed away to bring in more!

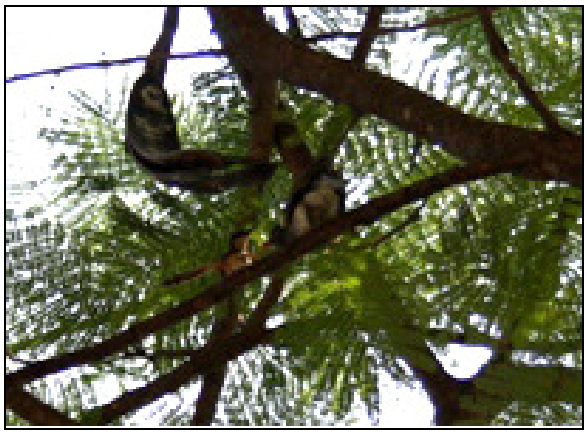
The chick which is a shy bird is often seen shifting from perch to perch, while the foster parent keeps track of the chick's position. This feeding process was noticed for a period of three days at a stretch. An adult Cuckoo was also seen in the vicinity on majority of the occasions, singing and trying to chase off the chick.

In October 2014, an Ashy Prinia's nest that was colonized by a Cuckoo was discovered in the Colony. However, the same fell victim to an attack by a Coucal.

A HD video of the feeding activity (of nearly 2 minutes' duration) is available for interested birders/researchers.



Ashy Prinia feeding Grey-Bellied Cuckoo chick (Sep 2011)



Ashy Prinia feeding Grey-bellied Cuckoo chick (Oct 2012)

Grey-bellied Cuckoo eggs in Ashy Prinia nest (Oct 2014)

Ashy Prinia feeding Grey-bellied Cuckoo chick (Aug 2015)

***

Bird of the Month

Text and photos: Umesh Mani

Blue-tailed Bee-eater (*Merops philippinus*)

Blue-tailed Bee-eater Adult (L) and Juvenile (R) (Chennai, 27-09-2015)

Order: Coraciiformes
Family: Meropidae
Genus: *Merops*
Species: *M. philippinus*
Size: 23-26 cm

Description & distribution: The Blue-tailed Bee-eater is a near-passerine member of the Meropidae family of bee-eaters. Like other bee-eaters, it is slender and richly coloured. The upperparts and underparts are mainly green, with a blue and brown wash, while the face has a black eye stripe with a narrow blue streak alongside, and the throat is yellow morphing into chestnut; this chestnut also extends to the ear-coverts. The forehead and crown are mainly green, with a touch of blue on the supercilium and above the black bill. The tail is blue with two elongated central tail feathers; rump and undertail-coverts are also blue. The sexes are alike. The juvenile lacks the elongated tail feathers, and the throat is more rufous than chestnut.

The Blue-tailed Bee-eater is distributed across north Pakistan; north, central and north-eastern parts of India; Nepal; Myanmar; south-eastern China; Philippines; and south to Sulawesi, Flores and Eastern Guinea. It is a local migrant, wintering further south in peninsular India, Sri Lanka, Malay Peninsula and Greater Sundas.

Habitat & behaviour: The Blue-tailed Bee-eater is usually seen in small groups, in sub-tropical open country, including parks, farmlands, paddy-fields, and scrub areas. It prefers to stay near large water-bodies, though it may also be seen near village ponds, tanks or lakes.

Its call is a *te-tew?, te-tew?*, somewhat reminiscent of the call of a Red-vented Bulbul, and it may also use a bi-syllabic *pr-reee, pr-reee*. The diet consists mainly of insects like bees, dragonflies, wasps and hornets, which it catches on the wing by sallying from open perches. It may also take butterflies, ants, beetles, bugs, grasshoppers and other ground insects. It hits the insect against the perch to kill it and break the exoskeleton before consuming it.

Nesting: The Blue-tailed Bee-eater breeds from March to June. It is a gregarious bird and nests colonially in groups of 5-20 pairs, though occasionally the groups may be larger. It nests in river-banks, sandy mounds, beach dunes or open flat areas like lawns, sometimes along with Bank Mynas. The nest is an unlined chamber at the end of a tunnel which is usually around 7cm across and 1-3m deep. Both parents share nest-excavation, incubation and feeding duties. The usual clutch consists of 3-6 white eggs, and older siblings may kill younger ones with their sharp bills in case of food not being abundant. Young ones are fed with dragonflies rather than the stinging insects. In case of a heavy downpour, colonies may abandon a site and re-start elsewhere.

Local name: The Blue-tailed Bee-eater is known as *'bada patringa'* in Hindi, *'komu passiriki'* in Telugu and *'kattalan kuruvi'* or *'panchankam'* in Tamil.

***

Sighting of the Thick-billed Green Pigeon at Visakhapatnam

Aparna Surampudi

Thick-billed Green Pigeon (female)
(Photo: Vikram Penmetsa)

The Thick-billed Green Pigeon (*Treron curvirostra*) is a resident bird in the Himalayas - from western Nepal eastward to Sikkim, North Bengal Duars and Bhutan, to extreme eastern Arunachal Pradesh - as also in the hills of north-eastern India, south of the Brahmaputra River. It affects well-wooded areas and forests from plains to at least 1,500 m a.s.l. (Ali & Ripley 1987). Its occurrence in peninsular India has not been recorded (Ali & Ripley 1987; Grimmett et al. 1998; Kazmierczak 2000; Rasmussen & Anderton 2005). There has been recent evidence of its presence in northern Eastern Ghats in the forests of Simlipal, Orissa (Nair 2010) and in Satkosia Tiger Reserve, Orissa (Durgesh 2010).

In this article, we report the sighting of the Thick-billed Green Pigeon for the first time in Visakhapatnam region in the state of Andhra Pradesh. Thotlakonda hillock is in northern Eastern Ghats ranges located along the east coast between latitude 17°49'35"N and 83°24'34"E longitude on the morning of 5th July, 2015 at 7.00AM.

The sprawling coastal city of Visakhapatnam is sandwiched between lush green hills with the Bay of Bengal on the eastern side. The city is located in a belt of tropical monsoon climate with two distinct rainy seasons that start in late June and end in mid-October. Thotlakonda Buddhist Complex lies about 15 km from Visakhapatnam city on the way to Bheemili town on a hill about 128 meters above Mean Sea Level overlooking the sea. It has dry deciduous forest interspersed with bushes and shrubs. The area is humid with an average rainfall of 900–1600 mm. Temperatures oscillate between 12^0C–40^0C. There are many wetland areas and coastal thorny scrub jungles harbouring myriad resident and migratory avifauna.

This individual was seen perching on the branches of an Acacia species tree near a man-made water tank. Observations were made from about 20 feet distance.

It is a rather small-sized pigeon being under 26 cm as compared to other green pigeons. A thick pale greenish bill with red base, broad bluish-green eye ring, grey crown and maroon mantle are diagnostic. Wings have black primaries and secondaries with yellow outer edge. Thighs are dark green with whitish scales. Female has greenish undertail-coverts with whitish scales. Males have maroon dorsum and dull chestnut undertail-coverts. The birds have a distinct bluish-green orbital skin, and a thicker yellow bill with red base, ruling out any misidentification. Pigeons are known to be nomadic outside their breeding season. It is classified as Least Concern in IUCN Red List, and distribution-wise, it is not reported from Visakhapatnam area.

However, a sighting in May is of additional interest as it falls in the breeding season of this species, which is April–June according to Rasmussen & Anderton (2005). Nair (2010) also suggested the same from Simlipal where the Thick-billed Green Pigeons have been sighted all the year round. This strengthens the chances of the presence of a breeding population in Eastern Ghats, and extends its range further south in peninsular India.

The main threats facing the northern Eastern Ghats include deforestation, hydropower projects, bauxite mining and road-widening. The massive impoundments that dams and their reservoirs have formed between the Andhra Pradesh and Odisha borders have submerged thousands of hectares of forests. Measures such as keeping a tab on forest encroachments, restricting road traffic particularly during the nights on the roadways traversing the Eastern Ghats and the Andhra-Odisha borders, and capacity building of local stakeholders will contribute to conservation of the northern Eastern Ghats region.

Our observations represent the presence of this species from the Eastern Ghats region in Andhra Pradesh possibly for the first time. It also beckons for further detailed investigations in these largely unexplored areas.

Acknowledgements
I am grateful to Mr. Vikram Penmetsa and Mr. Vivek Rathod for field support and contributing the photographs. I also stay obliged for the constant support and encouragement from the members of the Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh.

References:

Ali, S., & Ripley, S. D., 1987. Compact handbook of the birds of India and Pakistan together with those of Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan and Sri Lanka. 2nd ed.

Nair, M. V., 2010. Thick-billed Green Pigeon *Treron curvirostra* in Similipal Hills, Orissa: an addition to the avifauna of peninsular India. *Indian Birds* 6 (1): 19–20.

***

Birding at Night

Text and photos: Lawrence Mathappan

End of the summer with the arrival of monsoon awaited, we accompanied the young brigade of charged birders for a night's birding in the forests of Ananthagiri. Having made arrangements for our night halt at Vikarabad, the charged-up Anita, Amritha, Gowthama and Sudhir followed by Humayun and self geared up and reached Ananthagiri to find that the heat of day still had a grip on the forest. Impatient for action, we walked down into the silent forest to find movement and calls slowly picking up. Flashes of Bulbuls, Paradise-flycatchers, Oriental White-eyes around us cheered the spirits. As the sun dropped into the horizon, temperatures dropped and the activity picked up. The Magpie Robins, Tickell's Blue Flycatchers and the Babblers announced the end of the day by rushing around for the last meal.

Suddenly Anita saw a flash and said one word we were not prepared for: "Pitta!" she announced, and all other species went off the radar. We all looked in the direction of the pointed finger. Straining we looked through the shrubs; with the light fading everyone seemed to be praying for a glimpse, and suddenly the bird made a majestic appearance and flew off deeper into the forest.

We realized after searching for a while that we would not be able to see it as the light had faded and shadows had grown, covering the forest in a blanket of grey. After a lot of debate it was decided that as the bird was here at this time, we were bound to see it again in the vicinity in the morning; hence, marking the location, we left.

Visibility having dropped to a few meters, the realization of thirst and heat set in, and all of us voted for a break. As it was still early for the actors of the next session to enter the arena, on Humayun's suggestion we walked back and recharged ourselves. While we were refreshing ourselves the background changed. Cicadas, having entered the arena, started buzzing and the decibel level began to rise - Cicadas are known to be the loudest insects in the world with the African Cicada (*Brevisana brevis)* regularly producing 106.7db when measured at a distance of 50 cm - as loud as a motorcycle without its silencer!! They also have the longest life-cycle of any insect, ranging from 2 to 17 years.

Against this background came the melodious call of the Savannah and the Franklin's Nightjars. This put the energy back into us - we walked back into the forest, mesmerized by the darkness and unable to see anything, but the sound of the dwellers going about their nocturnal functions pressed us to go further. Wanting to see a Nightjar at night, we pinpointed one call, the beam of light cut through the darkness and locked on to the Savannah, and the cameras were out trying to capture the image.

That was when we heard the ghostly *"Hoo-hoo…"* of the Brown Fish Owl. The beam turned to the new arrival, the taunting *"Hoo-hoo…"* continued and the beam searched, coming up with no image. The bird decided that enough was enough, and took off. We got a glimpse of a flashing shadow, and that was when one realized how stealthy an owl can be. Not being able to sight it we glumly turned our attention back to the Nightjars. The sound of the night dwellers grew - we could hear the tremulous wail of Mottled Wood Owl, and the bark of an Indian Wolf.

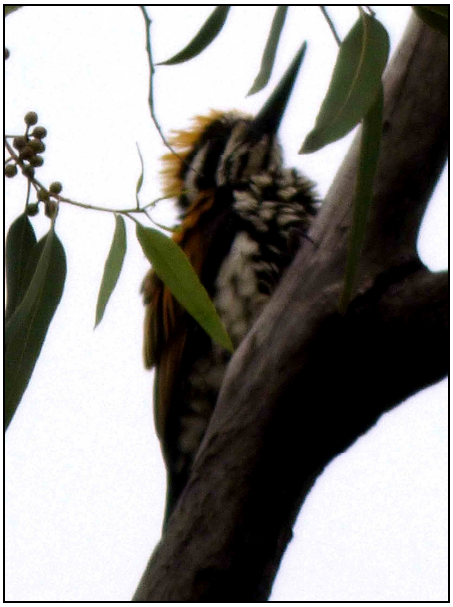
The clouds were building up so we decided to call it a day and returned to town for a hearty dinner and rest. The clouds opened up as we hit the bed. Early morning, all of us were ready, but the drizzle was challenging us. Determined, we set course, geared up for an early dose of birding - and, as if in sympathy, the rain gods decided to let up.

We walked into the forest and were met by the usual Tickell's Blue Flycatcher, apparently breeding close by, and a Magpie Robin father carrying the morning meal for his offspring. Trying to locate the nesting, we sighted an Orange-headed Thrush. We were surrounded by shrill calls and the ritual of the mating White-browed Fantail flycatchers. Far away, a female Crested Hawk Eagle was heard asking her mate for immediate attention.

We ventured further down the trail to the area marked in the hunt for sighting our friend the Pitta. As we walked, a flash of buff and red stopped us in our track. Having seen the flash earlier I was sure it was the Pitta. Seeing it for the first time other than on the BSAP T-shirts, I was awed by the colours - the fawn breast saddled by the cobalt-blue wings with a red seat, black mask tied around its eyes and the white spot as it opened its wings - amazing! We settled down on the track for a while, watching - that was when we realized that it was busy picking up nesting material, and we were also able locate the site of the nest.

Indian Pitta

I noticed that Humayun was frowning… when asked for the reason, he said that there had to be two of them, as this species shares the nest-building activity. After a while though, we still couldn't identify whether they were two or not. The drums of the forest nearby makes us turn our focus to the drummer, and I said I could see a pair of Black-rumped Flameback. The younger eyes thought otherwise, and I stood corrected - it turned out to be the not-so-common White-naped Woodpecker!



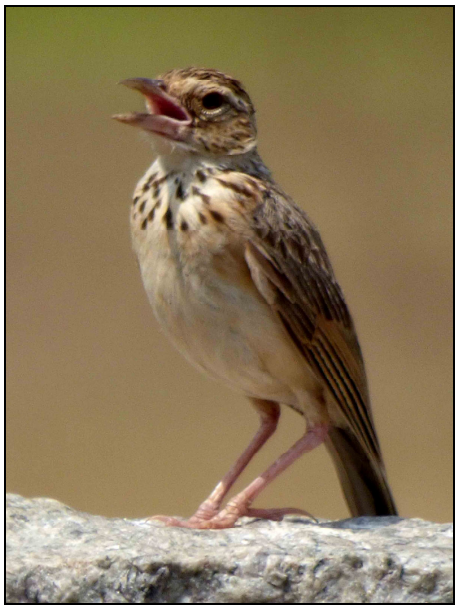
White-naped Woodpecker

When I enquired whether it was nesting, I was told, "No", and when I asked why not, pat came the answer from almost all the others - "Look at the thickness of the sapling, Uncle!"
Before I could ask another question all heads had turned - following their direction I could see a dog-like creature trotting away at quite a distance. As usual the sharp reflexes of Sudhir caught the sight on camera. On looking at the zoomed image it clearly showed us the Indian Wolf, which also confirmed that the bark we heard the night before was that of the Wolf.

The day continued in similar vein - we observed an old nest of the Crested Hawk Eagle, but missed the call of the Indian Cuckoo, which was very vocal a week before. The sun was up and the birds seemed to have moved into the shade - the surroundings started to become quiet. We too followed the birds to a shaded perch and as we sat down, relaxing for a while, a Short-toed Snake Eagle flew past above us.

As nothing else was happening, we decided to move back and look around the other parts of the forest. As we went around, we visited the nesting site of the Red-rumped Swallows inside a small culvert under the road which we had seen a year ago. Surprisingly we found that the nest was still being used - we saw the birds gliding into the culvert at one end and exiting through the other.

By now, activity had slowed down, the sun had peaked and so had our gastronomical needs! We ended the trip treating ourselves to a sumptuous Hyderabadi lunch, and reluctantly set course back to the city, promising to be back again soon.



Jerdon's Bushlark

***

For Private Circulation Only
Editors: Shanti Mani, Umesh Mani **Email:** bsap.pitta@gmail.com

For information, write to: Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh, PO Box 45, Banjara Hills, Hyderabad – 500034. **E-group:** http://groups.google.co.in/group/bsap_online. **Website:** www.bsap.in. **Society membership** (in Rs.): Annual: 500 per annum; Student: 200 per annum; Corporate: 2000 per annum; Life: 3000. (*Add Rs 75 for outstation cheques.)*